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AUTHOR Miller, Samuel D.
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ABSTRACT

Music activities are an important part of the preschool experience, yet these activities are often guided by teachers who have had little musical training. Lack of formal music training can be greatly compensated for by access to quality equipment and materials. These resources include a basic accompanying instrument, toy instruments, a durable record player, records for children to sing, move, and listen to, teacher resource and music books, and posters depicting instruments. Preschools can acquire costly music materials and equipment through the implementation and development of a long-term purchase plan. Recommended accompanying instruments are, first, the piano, and, second, the portaharp. A variety of sturdy, high-quality "toy" instruments may be purchased for moderate prices from numerous vendors. Heavily constructed record players intended for school use are desirable even though they rapidly wear out records. Carefully-selected and quality-controlled records produced by companies catering to the professional education market are often preferable to records purchased over the counter. Numerous song and musical activity books are available on the market. In addition, kindergarten and first grade standard textbooks can be excellent sources of a broader collection of songs and extensive teaching suggestions. (Author/JA)

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EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

FOR

INITIATING MUSICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE PRESCHOOL

by

Samuel D. Miller
The University of Houston

I. Basic Considerations

Young children are openly musical in their behavior. They like to sing, dance, play instruments, create, and listen. Not only do they enjoy using music for sheer aesthetic delight, they also learn and grow socially, physically, and intellectually through music. It may provide the needed stimulus to learn social behaviors such as taking turns or working with a group to achieve some common goal; to learn basic concepts attached to colors, words, or numbers; to learn about environment, cultures, and customs; to learn fundamental listening skills necessary to all academic endeavors; to perform or present in front of others; or to achieve initial academic success through some activity carried out that is commensurate with emerging capabilities.

Music may also be used simply to enrich, provide beauty, or give a change of pace to the school day. In short, it is hard to imagine children, the preschool, and its teachers without music at hand.

Because musical expression is so universal and basic, most

preschools encourage music activities. Frequently these activities are incidental. That is, they occur fortuitously or naturally in conjunction with the customary events of the school day. In this case, they are overseen by the regular preschool teacher. Sometimes the program is more formalized and planned. Here, it may be overseen by a music specialist.

Although increasingly more specialists have been hired nationwide in recent years, a vast majority of preschools do not have them, and hence, we must conclude that guidance in music activities rests primarily with the regular teacher who frequently possesses a natural love for the art, but often lacks formal training. Knowing and having access to quality equipment and materials, however, can ameliorate this deficiency to a significant extent.

These include: a basic accompanying instrument; toy instruments; a durable record player; records for singing, movement, and listening; teacher resource and music books, and perhaps some posters of instruments. While such a list seems formidable initially, acquisition is usually possible if a purchase plan covering several years is designed and implemented. Many of the items can be shared by several teachers once they have been provided guidance in care and usage. Sometimes this guidance is handled through inservice training session.

II. Equipment (Accompanying Instruments, Toy Instruments, Record Players)

Owing to its popularity in American homes; its capability to provide rhythms, melodies, and harmonies simultaneously; and ease of maintenance, the piano must still be considered the best all-round instrument for accompaniment. Age and construction indicate quality and usefulness. If these are within reason (as determined best by a competent technician), minimal maintenance will consist of one tuning and adjustment each year. Although much of the children's singing and dancing should be unaccompanied, it is fortunate indeed when a school owns several acceptable pianos and also has several faculty members who play them appropriately for music activities. Moreover, pianos provide children wonderful opportunities for sound exploration and experimentation.

As a second choice, the portaharp, rather than autoharp, is recommended. Although the two are similar in use and price (approximately $100), the portaharp has three distinct advantages: (1) it has a large resonating chamber built into the case, and hence a richer, more pleasing, and luxurious tone; (2) it stays in tune longer, and (3) the chord bars and strings are arranged in a manner that avoids the necessity of playing cross-handed. Most teachers, even those totally inexperienced in music, with guidance, can learn to provide a simple chordal accompaniment for songs within a half-hour on this instrument. Its only pitfall is that periodic tuning is necessary. This task may be performed by any competent specialist, or by a staff member who is a moderately proficient musician and is willing to seek help at first.

So-called classroom or "toy" instruments of durable, sturdy

quality may be purchased for moderate prices from numerous vendors, including Rhythm Band, Lyons, Kidstuff, and Peripole. Sometimes staff members prefer to purchase whole sets of designated instruments carried by these companies. Others prefer to order individual instruments. In either case, the following list (with approximate individual prices) should be considered as it affords great variety of sound and use, such as accompanying songs, rhythmic activities, and records; creating special effects and original compositions; or, again, sheer sound exploration. Very small children can easily play these instruments, for in each case only one simple bodily movement is required for activation. Yet dynamic and tonal qualities can be significantly varied.

Tapping Sticks	$ .45 per pair
Tambourine, 7"	5.00
Tuneable Hand Drum	10.00
Triangle, 5"	1.20
Maracas	4.00
Cymbals, 7"	5.00
Sand Blocks	1.25 per pair
Cluster Bells	.95
Wrist Bells	.95
Chromatic Melody Bells (G below middle C, up two octaves with case)	30.00
Wood Block with Striker	2.25
8 Note Resonator Bell Set (middle C up one octave with mallets)	22.00

Record players come in numerous brands, qualities, and prices. Several companies, including Audiotronics and Califone International

build models which produce fairly good sound quality and are especially intended for rugged school use, durability, and portability. Models with a single nine or ten inch built-in speaker, four speeds, and tonal and pause controls are quite adequate for the classroom. These should sell for approximately $100. While the heavier construction necessitates placement of more weight on records, causing them to wear faster, the advantages of these models more than compensate for this one disadvantage in the long run. Normally, several classrooms can share a single unit at first. Eventually, however, each classroom should house a unit. For larger assembly-type rooms, stereo models priced between $160 to $350, with two detachable speakers, may be purchased from these same companies.

While the expenditure for sound equipment seems high, we must recognize the fact that children are accustomed to hearing quality systems in their homes. Recent studies, for example, have even determined that in our country a majority of older boys and girls own sophisticated stereo equipment. Further, when investing, we must recognize that good equipment will last for years and benefit countless numbers of children.

III. Records

Within the scope of this article, it would be impossible to give a substantial listing of records facilitating singing, movement, and listening activities. Certain important procedures and principles, however, can be presented along with representative, useful titles.

One of the best places to begin is to search some catalogs of major vendors of educational records, for example, those of Bowmar, Lyons, RCA, Educational Activities, and Rhythm Band. While many records of all types can be purchased over the counter in record shops and department stores, frequently they must be purchased without a hearing. They may be excellent and sell at lower prices, but often they lack musical quality and are inappropriate for small children. Those produced by companies catering to the professional education market are usually carefully selected and quality controlled. Moreover, they frequently provide teacher guides which outline a number of uses. Schools might consider collections such as (1) Bowmar's"Small Musician Series," which includes "The Small Singer," "Dancer," "Listener," and "Player;" (2) "Rhythms Today" by Doll and Nelson, Silver Burdett; (3) "Adventures in Music, Grade 1, Volume I," Bowmar; or (4) "And the Beat Goes On: For Physical Education," Educational Activities.

Among the single records not to be overlooked are (1) story records such as "Peter and the Wolf," "Brother John and the Vill age," "Tom the Piper," and "Tubby the Tuba;" (2) song and rhythm records such as Ella Jenkins' "You'll Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song;" or (3) records which teach or reinforce basic learning concepts of colors, alphabet, numbers, etc., such as Hap Palmer's "Learning Basic Skills Through Music, Volume I."

A wealth of learning, growing, social, and musical experiences are possible through just these sources alone, and the teacher suggestions are excellent. From this modest beginning, the collection can be augmented subsequently with relative ease.

IV. Song and Resource Books

Numerous song and activity books are on the market. The teacher who has some musical knowledge can easily make good choices from those carried at the local department, book, or music store. For example, "A Collection of 50 Songs for Children," selected and arranged by Mary Nancy Graham, Whitman Publishers, which sells in department stores, is an excellent collection at a very modest price. For a broader collection of songs and extensive teaching suggestions, the kindergarten and first grade books of the standard textbook series are excellent--even the older ones that might be found tucked away on the shelves. Moreover, most of these series may be purchased with records which utilize children's singing voices. In chronological order, the following are among the most important: Our Singing World (Ginn, 1950), Music for Living (Silver Burdett, 1956), Growing with Music (Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), Magic of Music (Ginn, 1966), Making Music Your Own (Silver Burdett, 1966), and Silver Burdett Music (1974)

For further guidance on methodology, the child voice, and resources, teachers might look into Music in Early Childhood (published by the Music Educators National Conference, 54 pages) or perhaps one of the outstanding textbooks on elementary music education such as Robert and Vernice Nye's Music in the Elementary School (Prentice-Hall, 3rd ed., 1970). This latter source gives a marvelous, detailed listing of children's developmental characteristics, beginning with nursery school and kindergarten age, and

lists suggested implications for musical experiences which are both logical and appropriate.

V. Conclusion and Summary

The preceeding discussion presents only the most basic introduction to equipment and materials appropriate for initiating quality musical activities. It was prompted by many inquiries to the writer from various preschool staff members who are frequently forced to make purchase decisions, but yet lack sufficient confidence and knowledge about music equipment and materials to make them comfortably. Thus, they have sought help. It is in this light that the writer has presented certain basic recommendations, offering them to the profession.

Since, in addition to music supplies, preschool budgets are consumed through the purchase of books, art supplies, toys and games, playground equipment, and the like, it is important that all budgetary funds are spent wisely. Obviously, few schools, if any, could afford to purchase all of the supplies in the quantities suggested herein at one stroke. Therefore, it is expected that this discussion will suggest a way of developing balanced resources and possibilities for the future--so that our schools will be enlivened through the cheerful sounds of children singing, the fun of rhythmical movement and dance, the joy of playing instruments, and the challenge of listening to the musical expressions of others.

Companies Cited

1. Audiotronics, P. O. Box 3997, North Hollywood, California 91609.

2. Bowmar/Noble Publishers, Inc., 4563 Colorado Boulevard, Los Angeles 90039.

3. Califone International, Inc., Los Angeles, California 90016.

4. Educational Activities, Inc., P. O. Box 392, Freeport, New York 11520.

5. Ginn and Co., Boston, New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas, et al.

6. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 383 Madison Avenue, New York City 10017.

7. Kidstuff, P. O. Box 3681, Centerline, Michigan 48015.

8. Lyons, 530 Riverview Avenue, Elkhart, Indiana 46514.

9. Music Educators National Conference, 1902 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

10. Peripole (The World of), P. O. Box 146, Lewistown Road, Browns Mills, New Jersey 08015.

11. Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

12. Rhythm Band, Inc., P. O. Box 126, Fort Worth, Texas 76101.

13. Silver Burdett Co., Morristown, New Jersey; Glenview, Illinois; Atlanta; Palo Alto, California.